

United States Senate 409

May 24, 2018

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

I understand that given the role pole attachments play in broadband deployment projects, the Commission is currently reviewing its pole attachment rules, including consideration of "One Touch Make Ready" (OTMR) proposals. The OTMR would allow companies seeking to add equipment to a utility pole to move the pre-existing equipment of telephone, cable, and utility companies already on the pole.

While I recognize that streamlining pole attachment make-ready processes can be beneficial, I urge the Commission to ensure a clear approach regarding the OTMR proposed policy changes. These attachments are crucial to rural broadband growth. Access to high-speed broadband is essential to the quality of life for all American citizens. Such access provides for global competitiveness, a growing job market and educational opportunity. These proposed changes directly affect among other things: public and worker safety, job growth and existing collective bargaining agreements involving Communications Workers of America (CWA) members in my home state of Alabama.

I recognize that streamlining pole attachment make-ready processes sounds like a good idea, but the unintended consequences of a process that bypasses skilled workers could threaten worker safety and disrupt service to consumers. I urge the Commission to ensure that any make-ready policy that it adopts include safeguards that would protect the safety of workers and the public and minimize disruptions in service to consumers.

Existing attachers are in the best position to reduce customer outages and they have the skilled, trained workforce that is necessary to ensure that make-ready work is done properly and safely. Much of this work is being done by career employees with health and retirement benefits. These are important jobs. Accordingly, any new rules should ensure that existing attachers are able to maintain control over who is permitted to move their facilities.

In closing, I urge the Commission to review the issues aforementioned that directly affect my constituents and their respective communities—both urban cities and rural Alabama.

Sincerely,



Doug Jones
United States Senator



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 10, 2018

The Honorable Doug Jones
United States Senate
326 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Jones:

Thank you for your letter on pole attachments and “one-touch make-ready” (OTMR) proposals. My highest priority is making sure every American who wants high-speed Internet access can get it. But the plain reality is that if you live in rural America, you are much less likely to have high-speed Internet access than if you live in a city. If you live in a low-income neighborhood, you are less likely to have high-speed Internet access than if you live in a wealthier area. To change that, we need massive investment to construct, expand, and improve wired and wireless networks. And to spur that investment, the FCC needs to remove outdated and unnecessary barriers.

At our August 2 meeting, the FCC did just that by adopting an OTMR regime for the vast majority of attachments governed by federal law. Recommended by the Commission’s Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee, OTMR promises to substantially lower the cost and shorten the time to deploy broadband on utility poles. It allows a new provider who wants to attach to a pole to move all the wires and equipment in just one “touch.” It’s a bit like having to go to the grocery, the dry cleaner, and the bank. The slow way to do this would be to visit each business but return home each time. The rational thing we all do is to do each errand, one after the other, all on one trip. That’s essentially what OTMR is.

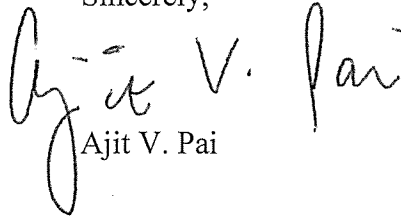
By making it quicker and cheaper to attach to poles, we can accelerate network buildout and make it easier for new entrants to provide more broadband competition. We included safeguards to protect the public and worker safety and excluded from OTMR new attachments that are more complicated or above the “communications space” of a pole, where safety and reliability risks are greater. We also respected existing collective bargaining agreements, allowing union labor to be present for survey and make-ready work and to conduct post-make-ready inspections through such contracts with existing attachers. Based on the record, we expect the OTMR regime to speed broadband deployment without substantial service interruptions or danger to the public or workers. As Google Fiber has put it, our efforts will “remove obstacles that reduce choice and competition for broadband consumers.”

In short, this Commission is heading forward, not backward. We’re favoring competition, not the status quo. We’re pressing for gigabit fiber, not fading copper. We’re embracing the promise of new entrants that want nothing more than a chance to compete, not the fears of incumbents who always find a way to say no. It’s unfortunate that this decision wasn’t unanimous, but nonetheless we are optimistic about the positive impact our decision will have on millions of Americans who want better, faster, and cheaper Internet access.

Page 2—The Honorable Doug Jones

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ajit" being the most prominent part, followed by "V." and "Pai".

Ajit V. Pai